



Meha Jain as Matangini Hazra

Revolutionary Pritilata Waddedar writes an anguish-ridden letter to her mother a few days before her death. She tells her mother how in her duty towards her country she has ignored her duty towards her mother; Waddekar wishes she could run back to her like she would do as a little girl...

Dressed in cotton saris Class IX students Abhishikta Saha and Abhilasha Nandi enacted the roles of the mother and daughter, reading an emotionally-charged letter and taking the audience to 1932, when the brave revolutionary consumed cyanide to avoid arrest after leading an attack on Pahartali European Club. Emotions ran high as around 217 students of Sri Sri Academy, Calcutta narrated the experiences of freedom fighters, focusing on the lesser-known ones, at their virtual Independence Day celebrations this year. Right from the primary section, the students presented a medley of songs, dances and performances to honour our heroes and narrate different stories behind the freedom struggle.

Chapters from the history book came alive as the students enacted Matangini Hazra, Rani Chemamma, Surya Sen, Khudiram Bose and Ram Prasad Bismil and other leaders in small performances. "It took me two days to get into my role as Pritilata's mother. I decided to wear my grandmother's sari and don a few grey strands to make my presentation realistic," said Abhishikta.

The programme began with the students taking a pledge of righteousness and good conduct, initiated by the principal, Suvina Shunglu. The dance numbers that followed paid tribute to our soldiers, war heroes and the sacrifices of the people.

As the students recounted the lives and resolutions of the freedom fighters they brought alive an era that they knew little about. "I did not know anything about Surya Sen. I read up on Google before enacting my part," said Sreyansh Banerjee of Class V.

"I also read up about Ram Prasad Bismil before reading a letter written by him. I learnt a lot as I performed," said Dhruv



Flag hoisting in school



Singers from classes II to V sing Hum rahi hain



Ridit Chakraborty as Sidhu Murmu



Dhruv Rana as Ram Prasad Bismil



Pritilata Waddedar and her mother played by Abhilasha Nandi (left) and Abhishikta Saha



Sreyansh Banerjee plays Surya Sen



Drishti Kuhar of Class II performs a dance move

Rana of Class VIII.

Class IV student Ridit Chakraborty, who did a Sidhu Murmu, leader of the Santhal rebellion, also tried to perfect a Hindi-Bengali accent. The hour-long programme had all the students performing from their homes.

According to the coordinating teachers the planning began right from June. About 31 teachers worked behind the scenes,

putting together the videos, coordinating and editing from home. Many students got to perform here, who have not got much opportunity in the past.

The multilingual event ended with a play, panning out in both colour and black-and-white and taking the audience to the worlds of Khudiram Bose, Prafulla Chaki and "Gandhi Buri". Pictures of mass struggle were used as the backdrop to add drama to the virtual world.

Forgotten stories behind the struggle

Students of Sri Sri Academy, Calcutta remember the sacrifices of lesser-known freedom fighters who are often only a few lines in the history books to them. **Young Metro** reports the virtual event...



Prishita Mohta

I wish for a safe and secure India. The sense of civic awareness, responsibility and ethics should be instilled in kids. They should learn to respect women, all faiths and cultural diversity. The freedom of mind is also important

— **Suvina Shunglu**
Principal

I was very excited when I learnt that I will play the role of Pritilata

Waddedar. I wore my mother's sari and set my camera up on a tripod as I said my dialogues. It was quite easy. I have taken part in skits before. My favourite historical character will always be Rani Laxmi Bai. I hope to play her one day

— **Abhilasha Nandi**
Class IX

I was part of the final skit. It was great fun to record and send our respective portions to our teachers. This is my last year and I was happy to be part of my school's Independence Day celebrations, even though on a virtual platform. Performing live would have been so much more fun

— **Khushi Nahata**
Class XII

I enjoyed watching the programme. I love history. I plan to take it up in college too. So, it was interesting learning about so many freedom fighters and their stories

— **Prisha Bidasaria**
Class XI

I narrated the story of Surya Sen for the event. The programme was a learning experience for me. Besides learning about so many freedom fighters, I also learnt to speak fluently. I was nervous initially. My video required quite a few retakes. But in the end, I was happy

— **Debarghya Addy**
Class V

Text by Chandreyee Ghose